

The Practice of Religious Politics in Plural Societies: A Perspective of Jürgen Habermas's Theory of the Public Sphere on the Dynamics of Democracy in Salatiga City, Indonesia



Journal of Interreligious Studies
December 2023, Issue 40, 18-36
ISSN 2380-8187
www.irstudies.org

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Abstract

The public sphere is highly crucial for democracy because it is one of the pillars of democracy. It is a manifestation of the political participation of various elements of society, including religious groups. It can be said that when the public sphere does not function properly, this is the beginning of the collapse of democracy in a nation that upholds it. This article confirms the main argument that the role of religion in the public sphere has made a very significant contribution to efforts towards a civilized democratic society for the people of the city of Salatiga. Using a phenomenological approach, this article integrates Jürgen Habermas's concept of the system and the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) in the public sphere towards the constructive role of Islam, Christianity, and Javanese indigenous religion. It argues that religions have become the epicenter for the development of a democratic civilization. The people of the city of Salatiga, with the characteristics of a multi-faith, multi-ethnic, and multi-political ideology, have developed a democratic life that has the potential to become a model for the development of democratic life for other communities in the world.

Keywords

public sphere, lifeworld, religion, plural society, democracy, Salatiga, Indonesia

Religion and politics have always been very closely intertwined in people's lives. Religion can be a resource for the development of democratic life—or, vice versa, it can become an obstacle to it if religion is characterized by anarchic, repressive, and colonialist actions. The development of democratic life in the people of Salatiga City, Indonesia (hereafter referred to as Salatiga) is deeply rooted in the spirituality of Abrahamic religions (Islam and Christianity) as well non-Abrahamic religions, namely Javanese religion (*Kejawen*). The appreciation of the Salatiga community in religious life is a driving factor for the role of religion in the public sphere. People

in Salatiga are active in discourse in the public sphere by articulating religious aspirations for the realization of a pluralistic democratic society.

The discourse on the role of religion and the public sphere has been widely discussed among Indonesian intellectuals. F. Budi Hardiman discusses the history of the public sphere from the ancient Greek era to the modern era with its various forms and challenges.¹ Gusti Menoh discusses the basic concept of Habermas's public sphere discourse by elaborating on the role of religion in political contestation in Indonesia, especially in the event of the change in the formulation of the state's constitution (the first precepts) on August 18, 1945.² In addition, a study of the public sphere in Salatiga society was conducted by Elia Tambunan, who elaborates on religious movements as economic and political forces.³ Abel Prakoso describes the discriminatory practice of Dutch colonial politics in Salatiga from 1917 to 1942.⁴

However, in contrast to these previous studies, this article will explore the dynamics of religious movements for the development of political civilization in democratic life through the participation of religions in the public sphere in Salatiga. Also, different from previous studies, in this article, we will use the perspective of Jürgen Habermas's public sphere theory to explore two important points: first, how religions and their spirituality are used by the Salatiga community to contribute to the development of democratic life through political participation in the community, the public arena; second, how religions and their spirituality in Salatiga are dynamically transformed so that their roles are in harmony with modern civilization in democracy.

To achieve that goal, this paper is divided into five parts. In the first part, we present the intent and purpose of this article. The second part outlines Habermas's theory of the public sphere as one of the interpretations in the sociology of religion. In the third part, we describe the dynamic process of the construction of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) that is the epicenter of the democratic living civilization of the Salatiga community. The fourth part describes how religious institutions manifest their communicative actions in the public sphere for the development of a democratic civilization. In the fifth part, we elaborate on the dynamics of the role of religion in its confrontational struggle in the public sphere against efforts to degrade democratic life in Salatiga. The *Salib Putih* [White Cross] Case has become the phenomenal public sphere case in the history of Salatiga City. This case reflects the tension between the society in the lifeworld with the political society in the governmental realm. The interpretation of this case will integrate perspectives of democracy and electoral politics as another element of public sphere dynamics. Finally, we will provide conclusions in the closing section.

¹ F. Budi Hardiman, *Ruang Publik: Melacak "Partisipasi Demokratis" dari Polis sampai Cyberspace* [Public Sphere: Tracing "the Democratic Participation" from Polis to Cyberspace] (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2010).

² Gusti A. Menoh, *Agama dalam Ruang Publik: Hubungan antara Agama dan Negara dalam Masyarakat Postsekuler Menurut Jürgen Habermas* [Religion in the Public Sphere: The Relationship of Religion and State in the Post Secular Society According to Jürgen Habermas] (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2015).

³ Elia Tambunan, *Islamisme dan Urbanisme: Kaum Islamis, Kristen Kapitalis Etnik Tionghoa, dan Aliansi Ekonomi-Politik di Kota Salatiga 1999–2017* [Islamism and Urbanism: Islamists, Chinese Ethnic Capitalist Christians, and the Political-Economy Alliance in Salatiga City 1999–2017] (Yogyakarta: Universitas Islam Nasional Sunan Kalijaga, 2017).

⁴ Abel Jatayu Prakoso, *Diskriminasi Rasial di Kota Salatiga 1917–1942* [Racial Discrimination in Salatiga City from 1917–1942] (Semarang: Sinar Hidoep, 2017).

In this article, we employ phenomenology in our analysis of the Salatiga public sphere by combining phenomenological descriptive research and phenomenological interpretive analysis. Phenomenological research focuses on things that seem like “facts, events, occurrences, mental activities.”⁵ Therefore, this research is, as Y. F. La Kahija says, “a study of a person’s subjective life experience or the lifeworld.”⁶ According to John Creswell, “phenomenological studies describe the general meaning of a number of individuals to their various life experiences related to a concept or phenomenon.”⁷ As part of qualitative research, phenomenological studies focus on the subjective experience of participants to express their understandings of phenomena. This article is the result of a phenomenological study of the subjective experiences of thirteen individuals—namely, seven Muslim and six Christian intellectuals who directly experience phenomena in the form of facts, events, and practices of democratic life in the public sphere in Salatiga. In reporting on this research, we deliberately protect the identity of all participants in this study, anonymizing them in appreciation of their interests and those of our university.

The data sources for this research are divided into three categories. First, verbal data from in-depth interviews with government bureaucratic staff, lecturers, leaders of religious organizations, leaders of ecclesiastical institutions, cultural actors, historians, and other social figures. The second is documentary data, which is obtained from writings. Third, observational data is obtained from observation of various expressions of communicative actions that are full of aspirations about the public interest in the public sphere.

This article presents an interpretation of the study of the sociology of religion to understand the role of religion in people’s lives. The study of practices and experiences regarding the role of religion in the public sphere in a democratic civilization is the focus of this research. The interpretation of the sociology of religion in the public sphere of Salatiga society by integrating the perspective of Habermas’s public sphere theory reveals that Abrahamic religions (Islam and Christianity) and Javanese religion have contributed significantly to the development of civilization in democratic life.

Habermas’s Theory of the Public Sphere and the Interpretation of Sociology of Religion

The idea of the public sphere in the political process is a central concept in the thought of Jürgen Habermas. The public sphere refers to the activities of individuals as citizens in articulating their aspirations for “regulations that are guiding relations” for social life in all aspects of life, namely political, economic, cultural, and other social relations.⁸ This conversation about regulation

⁵ Y. F. La Kahija, *Penelitian Fenomenologis: Jalan Memahami Pengalaman Hidup [Phenomenological Research: The Way to Understand the Experience of Life]* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2017), 50.

⁶ La Kahija, *Penelitian Fenomenologis*, 70.

⁷ John W. Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset: Memilih Diantara Lima Pendekatan [Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches]*, trans. Ahmad Lintang Lazuardi (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2018), 105.

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), 360: “The bourgeois public sphere may be considered above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them

becomes the focus of the discussion in the public sphere because “political power is always exercised in the form of law.”⁹ The better the regulations constructed by a government system and in line with the lifeworld, the more appreciative the voices articulated in the public sphere will be. On the other hand, when these regulations collide with the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), this situation will make communication actions in the public sphere in a confrontational situation. The public sphere becomes the “stream of communication” in political life.¹⁰

Public authorities in the democratic state ideally respect the freedom of citizens to exercise their rights, which include freedom of assembly and expression. Habermas idealizes that citizens can articulate their aspirations “rationally.”¹¹ As long as aspirations are rationally articulated, even if they have a confrontational tone, those in power need not worry about setting a bad precedent. The public sphere in a democratic society is often the sphere of confrontation. It can even be said that the act of citizen communication which is confrontational but without having to clash with those in power is an indication of democratic civilization.

A democratic government should carry out the management of public life in a transparent manner so that the public can access all information related to the subject of public discussion. The freedom to be able to access information will empower the public to be able to think rationally and be able to actualize their political participation constructively in the public sphere. Intersubjectively rational communication for the deliberation process in the public sphere that represents public aspirations is called an act of communication.

According to Habermas, the aspirations that are articulated in the public sphere are strongly influenced by the dynamics in the lifeworld. This is “a complement to the concept of communicative action.”¹² Another term for the lifeworld is life forms, viz., culture and language communities. “The lay concept of the lifeworld refers to the totality of sociocultural facts.”¹³ In Habermas’ words, the lifeworld is:

the lifeworldly stock of knowledge [that] is related in many ways to the situation of the experiencing subject. It is made up from sedimentations of formerly actually present experiences that are bound to situations. Inversely, every actually present experience is inserted into the flow of lived experience and into a biography, according to the set of types and relevance found in the stock of knowledge. And finally, each situation is defined and mastered with the help of the stock of knowledge.¹⁴

in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of their reason (*öffentliches Rasonament*).⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in the Political Theory* (The MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts), 253.

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge MA: Polity Press, 1997), 360.

¹¹ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 360.

¹² Budi Hardiman, *Demokrasi Deliberatif: Menimbang ‘Negara Hukum’ dan ‘Ruang Publik’ dalam Teori Diskursus Jürgen Habermas [Deliberatif Democracy: Considering ‘Rechtsstaat’ and ‘Public Sphere’ in the Theory of Discourse or Jürgen Habermas]* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2009), 8.

¹³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communication Action: Lifeworld and System. A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, vol. 2, trans. T. McCarthy (Boston, Massachusetts: 1987), 136.

¹⁴ Habermas, *The Theory of Communication Action*, 128.

It is a repository of patterns—the pattern of meaning which is the basis of the act of communication that is reproduced and organized linguistically. “Communicative action takes place within a lifeworld that remains at the backs of participants in communication.”¹⁵ A lifeworld contains norms and values that are instilled through cultural traditions and socialization. In other words, the lifeworld is a society’s personality which consists of socio-cultural elements constructed by collective experiences in the past and present which are dynamically organized linguistically. All of that is crystallized and becomes the knowledge base of the community to understand and respond to regulations constructed by the government system.

Ideally, according to Habermas, the government can be called democratic when the regulations that are constructed reflect more and more of the lifeworld. Apart from being determined by the lifeworld, citizens’ communication actions in the public sphere are influenced by the political system created by the government which consists of the bureaucracy and the market.

The representation of the presence of the political system is contained in legal products both in the political and economic fields, such as laws, regulations, and other political policies. Political and economic society in the realm of the system influences the communication actions of individuals in the public sphere. The power of capital as another element of the political system can manipulate the public sphere into the market sphere. Harmony in social relations is manifested in a democratic society when these regulations can reflect the aspirations of the lifeworld. Instead, conflict is the result of tension between the lifeworld and the political system.

The Lifeworld of the City of Salatiga

The lifeworld in the City of Salatiga is a social construction that has a long history. In the past, Salatiga was part of the territory of the Banu Kingdom. Based on literary sources and communal memory, the life of the people of Salatiga has been influenced by Hindu civilization. The positive interaction of the King of Banu with the people who have difficulty paying taxes to the palace underlies that the king of Banu privileged Salatiga to be a “*perdikan*” area. With this status, the people of Salatiga are freed from the obligation to pay taxes, especially since July 24th, 750 ZB.¹⁶ The transformation into a *perdikan* area marks the initial milestone of the Salatiga community’s independent way of thinking. Previously they were under the rule of a kingdom and later turned into citizens of the *perdikan*. In this change, the boundaries between noble people and non-noble ones became somewhat looser. The culture of life grew into an emancipatory and egalitarian culture, even though at that time it was still homogeneous with the Javanese ethnicity as the only ethnicity inhabiting Salatiga.

The presence of Muslim traders from India to the archipelago in the 15th century led to direct contact between the Javanese civilization and the global world. According to Michel Picard, the Islamization of Java and Javanization of Islam took place simultaneously. While

¹⁵ Jürgen Habermas *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, vol 1., trans. T. McCarthy (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1984), 335.

¹⁶ *Pemerintah Kota Salatiga—Salatiga Hati Beriman [The Government of Salatiga City—Salatiga Hati Beriman]*, June 23, 2019. http://Salatigakota.go.id/tentang_sejarah.php.

trading, Muslim traders who were generally Sufi and were inspired by Hinduism succeeded in spreading Islam among the Javanese people.¹⁷ A Sufi Islam that is colored by Hinduism “presumably eased the transition from mystical Hindu-Buddhism to mystical Islam.”¹⁸ At this early stage, there was no significant suspicion from Javanese people about the presence of Islamic teachings. Islam is seen as “another source of mystical power.”¹⁹ In subsequent developments, the interaction of the Javanese civilization with the Islamic one took place dynamically and was sometimes marked by conflict, tension, and accommodation.

The Dutch colonialization in the 16th to 20th centuries became another milestone in the contact of the Salatiga people with global civilization. Gradually the colonialization of the Dutch erased the autonomy of Salatiga. The people of Salatiga became colonized in their ancestral lands. On the other hand, colonization became a bridge for them to interact with modern Western civilization. Western modes of education, transportation, entertainment, and health enter into society. The humanistic interactions between colonial and colonized communities are also marked by international marriages. Interracial marriages between followers of different religions became a bridge for the Javanese people in Salatiga to embrace Christianity. The lifeworld in Salatiga became more and more diverse in terms of religion, ethnicity, and race. The construction of people’s personalities is increasingly colored by global civilization as well.

In Salatiga, the transition of colonial community settlements from plantation areas to community residential areas was followed by a revolution in urban architecture. The aspirations of the colonial people dominated the architecture of the city’s landscape. To build a sense of comfort, military facilities and infrastructure from the Dutch colonial government were designed for surrounding residential areas. However, this phenomenon has become a language of terror that instils psychological fear and powerlessness of the colonized people not to carry out rebellions even at the level of the collective imagination.

The comfort of the Dutch people who lived in Salatiga underlies their appreciation of Salatiga as the most beautiful city in Central Java (*schoonste Stad van Midden Java*). This nickname seems to point not only to the supposed superiority of its natural charm and geographical position, but also to the personality of the Javanese ethnic community in Salatiga. However, the comfort of the Dutch people in Salatiga is inversely proportional to the experience of the people of Salatiga themselves. Dominant relations with a colonial power have become a bad experience; however, it also fosters the collective consciousness of the Salatiga community as a colonized society. The colonizers confirmed their demarcation line from the colonial entity. Day by day the political awareness of the deprivation of their human dignity became stronger. The discriminatory and repressive actions of the colonial community triggered the community to integrate themselves into the national movement as brothers and sisters who shared the same fate. All the experiences of the colonial era “give the preconditions for unity.”²⁰ Indonesian identity becomes a political identity that is upheld to realize the collective imagination of

¹⁷ Michel Picard, “Introduction: ‘Religion’, ‘custom’, and Pancasila,” in *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, orthodoxy, and religious contention in Java and Bali*, ed. Michel Picard and Remy Madinier (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.

¹⁸ Picard, “Introduction”, 8.

¹⁹ Picard, “Introduction”, 8.

²⁰ Yudi Latif, *Negara Paripurna: Historitas, Rasionalitas dan Aktualitas Pancasila [An Ideal Country: Historicity, Rationality and Actuality]*. Cetakan v. (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2015), 272.

independence. The horizon of thought is transformed from primordial and exclusive thinking based on locality and ethnicity to nationalist thinking. The colonial experience became a process of forming an inclusive community grounded in solidarity, which was manifested in nationalism. The community identifies itself in a way that transcends the boundaries of primordial identity based on region and ethnicity.

After the independence of Indonesia, the life of the Salatiga people was filled with the affirmation of national identity with pluralist, emancipative, egalitarian, and inclusive characteristics. Salatiga is no longer a homogeneous city with ethnic Javanese who embrace the Javanese religion, and generally has a limited economic position, but has revolutionarily turned into one that is heterogeneous in ethnicity, race, class, and religion. At present, Islam has turned into the religion embraced by the majority of the Salatiga population.

Dynamics of Communication of Salatiga's People in the Public Sphere

The dynamics of communication in the public sphere by the people of Salatiga are creatively actualized through various mediums, including religious celebrations and education at the university level. The Salatiga community is creative and wise in communicating their aspiration in the public sphere. Their political commitment to the realization of a civilized, tolerant, pluralist, harmonious and democratic society is intensely articulated in the moments of religious celebrations. Rituals for celebrating religious holidays are used as a stage for the public sphere to explicitly articulate aspirations for a pluralist, humanist, harmonious, and democratic society. Religious rituals implicitly also become the stage for articulating confrontations against self-interested communication acts that are contrary to democracy.

Religious Celebrations and Democratic Aspirations in Public Sphere

Religious celebrations become the stage for the public sphere containing actions that communicate noble religious values to increase harmony, tolerance, emancipation, equality, and pluralism. One of the religious celebrations in Salatiga is *Saparan*, which was originally a Javanese religious celebration (referred to as *Kejawen*) that articulated solidarity, inclusivity, and plurality. At the celebration, families serve a variety of the best food and drinks to guests whether known or not. Anyone who passes through the house or place of business is invited to enjoy a meal. This sharing spirit is motivated by the belief that people who share food will be rewarded in the form of health, luck, and other joys. According to one interviewee, "the more guests are served and enjoy the food and the drink, the much more blessings will be received from God".²¹ Failure to celebrate this celebration is believed to have an impact on bringing in disasters such as disease and natural disasters.

The second religious celebration is *Nyadran*. The high enthusiasm behind the *Nyadran* celebration is the belief of Javanese ethnic groups, whether of Christian or of Muslim background, that the spirits of the dead still live in the afterlife. Both Javanese Muslims and

²¹ The interview with participant 1.

Christians believe that the kindness of the deceased's family and relatives in the form of prayers and visits has positive implications for the soul's life. Just as the good deeds of the deceased have positive implications for the lives of their descendants, so also the good deeds of the descendants of the deceased have positive implications for the continuity of the soul's life.

Nyadran is usually held before the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. Before or after the activity of praying and having a meal at the tomb, there is usually mutual assistance from the community for the cleanliness of the village. This celebration begins with the presence of the family and relatives of the deceased. The family of the buried usually brings food and drink. A communal meal communicates symbolically that all the families of the person buried are one big family. The tomb becomes the stage of a public sphere that articulates the message of kinship, unity, and equality in diversity.

The Javanese people in Salatiga who embrace Islam or Christianity are not hostile to the Javanese religion (*Kejawen*). Rather, they appreciate it as being full of noble values and in harmony with Islam and Christianity. The interaction between the religions takes place in harmony so that Muslims and Christians can participate in the celebration of *Saparan* and *Nyadran*. These two celebrations are lived as expressions of *Kejawen* as well as the appreciation of faith in Islam and Christianity. Openness to both Islam and Christianity “does not necessarily constitute a complete severance of any connection with the Hindu Javanese past but rather demonstrates how it can be integrated.”²² The intellectuals of Islam and Christianity are not hostile to their followers who celebrate the two rites; they do not stigmatize them as syncretists or infidels.

Concerning the two celebrations, the Javanese religion seems to remain an authoritative life text that guides the Salatiga people to understand the reality of their lives. *Saparan* and *Nyadran* become a public sphere that integrates the community in its diversity. The tomb is a multi-ethnic and multi-faith place of celebration. This is a celebration of unity in diversity. Differences in religion, ethnicity, and culture of family members of the buried person do not become the root of conflict, disharmony, and disintegration. The people of Salatiga confront the idea that religious plurality is a source of discrimination and disharmony.

The personality of the Salatiga community who respects others, both living and dead, is deeply rooted in respecting the sacred values of religion and community spirituality. Respect for others is not reduced to mere commitment to positive law, political ideology, or the state constitution. Eschatological appreciation of Muslim and Christian communities with Javanese ethnic backgrounds towards the spirits of the dead who remain eternal in the afterlife is a source of motivation to realize respect for others. These religious values and spirituality have positive implications for the civilization of a democratic society. Apparently, the realization of a democratic society is not only a legal, ideological, and political discourse but also a religious discourse.

In addition to Javanese religious celebrations, the Abrahamic religions (Islam and Christianity) are also a stage for the public sphere filled with actions to communicate humanist

²² Franz Magnis Suseno, *Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisa Falsafi tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa* [*The Ethics of Java: A Philosophical Analysis on the Wisdom of Java's Life*] (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2001), 32.

and democratic religious aspirations. “During the moment of fasting, local communion of churches organization churches is used to share some sweet food eaten upon the breaking the fast (*takjil*) for the Muslims. It is to articulate Christian appreciation for the Muslim sacred tradition”²³. Muslim students of State Islam University are also used to breaking the fast together with Christians students of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana. “It is a wisdom to foster the spirit of plurality and inclusiveness in the city of harmony.”²⁴ Before the Islamic religious celebration of Eid al-Fitr is carried out, Muslims practice the tradition of sending food and drinks to their neighbors. This celebration is held in Salatiga’s public square, namely the Pancasila Square, and is usually attended by people from both Muslim and non-Islamic circles. Muslims celebrate it by praying the Eid prayer while non-Muslims also celebrate it by cooperating with security forces to maintain security for Muslims who pray. After the Muslims finished praying, the non-Muslims greeted them to congratulate them. “Non-Muslims also congratulated Muslims who were not present in the field by visiting them to their houses.”²⁵

The presence of Christians in the Pancasila Square during Eid al-Fitr is an act that communicates aspirations of a democratic society that this is a public or national celebration. The tradition of this celebration becomes simultaneously religious and national. Just as Eid is a public celebration, the tradition of observing Christmas and Easter by the people of Salatiga also takes place as a public, national celebration held at the Pancasila Square. During the two celebrations, Muslim youths may volunteer to maintain order around the square by collaborating with the security forces. They deliberately dress in black as a sign of identification. In both Christian celebrations, the mayor and his staff attend these from beginning to end by sitting on a mat. Openness to participate in religious celebrations is a social performance that shows respect for religious equality in the context of a plural society.

The yearly ecumenical tradition of celebrating Easter and Christmas by the Christian churches in Salatiga together with the Muslim community is a unique phenomenon for the Indonesian people. The participation of Muslims in the two celebrations is an act of communication that is replete with national aspirations in a democratic society. Christians are indeed a minority in Salatiga, but they are not treated as an inferior society. For Christians in Salatiga, Islam is also an honorable religion.

Harmony does not always exist in religious celebrations in Salatiga City. The Governor of Jakarta elected in 2017 as well as the regional and national elections in 2019, which blatantly and massively fed on religion-based, political identity markeres, have become the theatre of controversial and destructive politics for nationalism and democracy in Indonesia. In 2018, the leader of the Indonesian Ulama Council, as an element of political society at the national level, issued a fatwa forbidding expressing Christmas greetings to Christians. This action generated responses from the public. The Indonesian Ulama Council fatwa that was circulated through printed and electronic media and accessed by the public in Indonesia had destroyed the harmony, tolerance, and integrity of communities in some cities—including communities in Salatiga. Some people in Salatiga fully obeyed the fatwa. The tradition of the Muslim community to visit their neighbor Christians who celebrate Christmas had been disrupted. Some people,

²³ The interview with participant 2.

²⁴ The interview with participant 3.

²⁵ The interview with participant 4.

while still visiting Christian homes, followed the recommendation of Indonesian Ulama Council leadership not to shake hands with Christians and nor to give Christmas greetings. Those who refuse to shake hands with Christians and deliver Christmas greetings argue that shaking hands and conveying Christmas greetings means that one believes in the deity of Jesus (Isa).²⁶

This phenomenon shows that the glorification of practical power has trapped some politicians in the actions of instrumentalizing religions. Religion in the hands of politicians can become ammunition for attacking their political competitors. It confirms that Islam and any other religion has an “ambivalent phenomenon.”²⁷ The dark side of religion for democracy confirms Habermas’s thinking: he is seriously cautious about the role of religion in public sphere.

Fortunately, the impact of political identity from the Jakarta governor election did not last long in the atmosphere of the Salatiga lifeworld. In 2019, after the gubernatorial election, regional election, and general election took place and concern over polarization increased, young people from all religions made Easter at the Gereja Kristen Jawa Sidomukti (Sidomukti Javanese Christian Church) a joint religious event. They deliberately articulated that event to the public via digital communication tools. This event, organized by youth of mosque and young students, has become an action loaded with positive messages for local and national communities. First, their togetherness in the primordial celebration confronts the politicization of religions for the sake of political power that destroys the harmony and integration of the nation. Second, their interfaith Easter celebration has become an expression of concern about polarization; and at the same time, it has become an effort to strengthen solidarity and integration of the nation. The leadership of GKJ Sidomukti said that the celebration of interfaith Easter draws no negative responses from the public of Salatiga City.²⁸ However, negative responses come from people outside of Salatiga through some social media communications.

Theological and Religious Education Articulate Democratic Aspirations

As elements of the lifeworld in Salatiga, Islamic and Christian higher education institutions (which are managed by religious communities) become the stage of the public sphere. The provision of education includes actions that communicate collective religious aspirations for a harmonious and humanist society. Respect for democratic values in the form of respect for the plurality that includes primordial identities such as ethnicity, religion, race, and class does not only take place in religious celebrations in grassroots communities but also takes place in the higher education community in Salatiga.

A decade after Indonesian independence, Christian intellectuals in Salatiga, represented by, among others, O. Notohamidjojo and Basuki Probowinoto, initiated the establishment of a Christian university, called Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW). This university was formed in the atmosphere of nation-building because, in the 1950s, the euphoria to build the nation in all aspects of life rippled across all parts of Indonesia. As a result, several universities

²⁶ The interview with participant 5.

²⁷ P. Berger and T. Lukmann, “Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge” in *Sociology of Religion*, ed. Roland Robertson (Australia: Penguin Books Inc., 1972), 61.

²⁸ The interview with participant 6.

were established. The word “Christian” in the formulation of the name of the university explicitly communicates to the public sphere the commitment of the university to the Word of God. In Sanskrit, *satya* means faithful, and *wacana* means word, so *satya wacana* means faithful to the word (of God). Since the founding of this university, commitment to Christian values has been creatively articulated in line with a commitment to national values. Christian moral education and the *Pancasila* moral education became the first study programs.

The leadership of O. Notohamidjojo (a legal expert and statesman) and Basuki Probowinoto (a pastor, theologian, and statesman) in the establishment of this university deserves mention. Indeed, Notohamidjojo was presumably the model of a true Christian scholar. He earned a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Indonesia. His scholarship in law enabled him, together with Probowinoto, to juxtapose Christianity and Indonesia. They formulated the vision of this university as *universitas scientiarum*—which means that the university became the scientific society that applies interdisciplinary and critical learning in the context of equality.²⁹ The ideal university is the embodiment of a scientific community with a high level of competence and integrity in harmony with biblical truth. In addition, the imagination of the scientific community that is idealized collectively is *magistrorum et scholarium*,³⁰ which mean a scientific community consisting of teachers and scholars.

The transformation of IKIP Satya Wacana to a university also increasingly confirms its vision and mission towards Christianity and nationality. Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana is committed to the comprehensive development of Indonesian human resources. It not only focuses on the development of Christianity but also all dimensions of science. At present, more than 50% students of UKSW are non-Christian students.

Concerning higher theological education in Indonesia, UKSW is a pioneer in implementing an inter-disciplinary approach to theological studies. At UKSW, theology is in intense dialogue with other sciences, such as philosophy, history, culture, economics, and politics. The development of religious studies with such an interdisciplinary approach broadens the horizons of religious thought for religious (theological) communities in Salatiga. Theological dialogue with all scientific disciplines such as philosophy, culture, religion, law, and politics also supports students to be able to develop a critical attitude and an appreciative attitude toward both Christian and non-Christian religions. In providing this kind of education, Christianity becomes an open entity and can appreciate the noble values of all religions. Along with that, the exclusive nature of religions is also criticized to avoid the trap of deifying religious texts.

In such theological education, awareness of the construction of religious texts underlies the importance of a critical approach to them. The sacredness of God is respected, but the formulation of God’s presence in the language is understood as that which is not always sterile from human interests in a particular context of space and time. Religious books have a transcendental dimension in which transcendent powers also inspire and influence their construction. However, the exclusive character is also inherent in the construction of these religious texts. In this construction, the divine and the human simultaneously influence the process. Theological education carried out in an interdisciplinary manner challenges religions to

²⁹ O. Notohamidjojo, *Kreativitas Yang Bertanggung-Jawab [A Responsible Creativity]* (Salatiga: UKSW, 2011), 97.

³⁰ O. Notohamidjojo.

be able to identify these exclusive values so that they are not trapped in the act of divining their religious books. This understanding is applied to all religious texts objectively and critically. The implication is that the theological studies held at UKSW can critically identify the core messages of religious texts from messages that are biased by the exclusive interests of the early community that constructed them.

The implementation of this interdisciplinary approach further enables theological studies at UKSW to openly identify noble religious messages in various religious texts, historical texts of travelling with a nation and in cultural texts. The texts of religious books are also juxtaposed equally with authoritative texts. This kind of openness in theological education provides a critical and constructive appreciation for the plurality of texts. This is what distinguishes theological studies at UKSW from theological studies at other theological higher education institutions where “it is very often the case that other ‘texts’ in the current context are neglected.”³¹ The interdisciplinary approach has made UKSW appear as a pioneer in theology that is inclusive, emancipatory, pluralist, and has a national perspective.

Concerning the theological education paradigm as mentioned above, a revolutionary consequence is that theological studies at UKSW are open to being accessed by students from various religious backgrounds. Phenomenally, the Faculty of Theology through its post-graduate program, Master of Sociology of Religion and Doctor of Sociology of Religion, became a meeting place for interfaith intellectuals to study theology together. Theological studies with an interdisciplinary approach have transformed UKSW into a public sphere for interfaith studies. UKSW has been a pioneer in “transcending the boundaries of class, society and country.”³² Building Indonesian Islam, Indonesian Hinduism, Indonesian Buddhism, Indonesian Christianity, and Indonesian Javanese became a central and crucial collective discourse in this kind of theology. Religion and Indonesianness are seen as “two spirits, two spirits and two souls”³³ in harmony. The celebration of plurality in religion, ethnicity, race, language, and other primordial aspects at UKSW has earned this university public appreciation as “*Indonesia Mini*” (the Miniature of Indonesia).

About two decades after the formation of UKSW, Muslim intellectuals, especially those from the Nahdlatul Ulama circle, started the movement to build Indonesian identity in the education sector. In the 70s the Faculty of Education of the Nahdlatul Ulama Teacher Training and Education Institute in Salatiga was established. Concern over the scarcity of educators for the newly independent nation underlies the noble mission of its founders. The consistency of Muslim intellectuals in Salatiga in building Islam and Indonesianness can be seen through the transformation of Nahdlatul Ulama Teacher Training and Education Institute into the Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion.

³¹ Yusak B. Setyawan, “*Teologi Biblika dalam Arena Publik Menuju Corak Baru*” dalam *Sosiologi Agama Pilihan Berteologi di Indonesia: 25 Tahun Pascasarjana Sosiologi Agama Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana*, edit. Izak Lattu et al. [The Biblical Theology in the Public Arena Toward A New Paradigm” in *The Sociology of Religion: A Paradigm of Doing Theology in Indonesia: 25 Years of Post Graduate of the Sociology of Religion*](Salatiga: Fakultas Teologi Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, 2016), 208.

³² Notohamidjojo, *Kreativitas Yang Bertanggung-Jawab*, 97-100.

³³ The interview with participant 7.

Significant transformation in the management of Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion is marked by the integration of Islamic communities with the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah lines in managing it. This integration and collaboration can be called the initial milestone in the history of Islamic plurality in the body of an Islamic university. The two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia have the same vision but with their unique approaches. The Muhammadiyah Islamic community is more concerned with modern civilization, while the Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic community is still concerned with appreciating the noble traditions that live in Indonesia.

The embedding of the word “Salatiga” in the formulation of campus identity articulates the collective appreciation of Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion for the lifeworld of Salatiga. The Salatiga community, which is predominantly Muslim but tolerant, pluralist, egalitarian, and nationalist, is implicitly idealized as a model of Indonesian Islamic practice. Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion also communicates itself to the public sphere by pinning the names of two national figures—KH Hasyim Asy’ari (an important Nahdlatul Ulama figure) and KH Ahmad Dahlan (an important Muhammadiyah figure)—to the twin buildings in the front yard of the Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion campus. Their tradition of thought and history of struggle is idealized by this community as a reference text in Islamic studies in Indonesia.

The embedding of the two historical figures of the nation implicitly became an act of communication by Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion to the public that the history of the nation’s journey was accommodated as a text of Islamic religious studies (theology) there. The idealized Islam in this institute’s Islamic studies program is represented in the spirit and noble values of the struggle of those two figures. The Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion community collectively idealizes Islamic dynamics that contribute to the realization of an Indonesian Islamic community that is free from all yokes of colonialism. In short, embedding the name of the independence revolutionary fighter figure is an effort to harmoniously juxtapose the national (Indonesian) and religious (Islamic) vision and mission. The history of the nation becomes an authoritative text of life side by side with the text of the Koran. “Indonesianness and Islam can go hand in hand. The two should not be contradictory.”³⁴

The Islamic style that is actualized by the intellectual community at Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion is Islamic *wasathiyah* (moderate Islam), which has been emphasized since the beginning of the campus establishment. Imam Sutomo said that “the word *wasathiyah* is right in the middle of all the verses of the Holy Quran. The call to stand in the middle as the call of Islam *wasathiyah* is a central mandate from the Holy Qur’an.”³⁵ Moderation of Islam is disseminated through the openness of Islamic intellectuals in the institute by respecting Muslims who continue to practice their Islam, colored by the traditions of religiosity and spirituality of the Javanese Hindu religion. Ancient Javanese Hindu religiosity and spirituality became a text that was side by side with the Quranic text in guiding the practice of Islamic life. Intelligence harmoniously integrates new elements from other religions into the uniqueness of the Javanese Muslim and Christian communities in Salatiga. “Imported religions are permeated by culture

³⁴ The interview with participant 8.

³⁵ The interview with participant 9.

[Javanese religion] until they become expressions of Javanese identity itself.”³⁶ The intellectuals did not respond to Muslims with sanctions either communally or institutionally. The inclusive and tolerant attitude of Muslims is even manifested through their participation in non-Islamic religious celebrations such as Easter and Christmas.

Mahfudz Ridwan was another phenomenal figure from the early history of the establishment of Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion until the post-Reformation period in 1998. He is an Islamic educator with a statesman’s spirit. His legacy of Islamic studies approach is religious studies with a theological, critical, and contextual approach. Concerning the recitation of the Qur’an, he advised Muslims “not to read it textually...but contextually.”³⁷ Through Mahfudz Ridwan, Nahdlatul Ulama represented itself as a “religious organization based on traditional society,”³⁸ yet one whose intellectuals implemented a rational hermeneutic in interpreting the Qur’an. Ridwan practiced this approach in his teaching at Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion as well as at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana as a guest lecturer. Hermeneutics as one of the results of the world of science in the modern era is integrated into the study of religious books. In other words, a scientific approach to the Qur’an empowers them to criticize some texts of the Qur’an. They are spared from fundamentalist and radical thinking. They become inclusive and tolerant of different religions. Critical and contextual hermeneutics in studying the Qur’an becomes the legacy of Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion, which maintain’s Ridwan’s legacy. As one participant in this study noted, “We always motivate students to write a thesis about Mahfudz Ridwan. A student’s proposal for writing about Mahfudz Ridwan will be appreciated with high enthusiasm.”³⁹

The intense dialogue between the religious world and the world of science in the realm of Christian and Islamic universities has transformed and dynamized the actualization of the role of religion in a plural society. The world of science enlightens the religious world with insights that further broaden religious horizons in understanding the divine presence and at the same time human beings, especially in understanding religious texts. Collective awareness disseminated by universities in Salatiga about the role of humans in the construction of religious texts has built awareness of the significance of critical and contextual approaches to religious texts.

The elaboration shows that communicative actions done by the public of Salatiga City for a democratic civilization are not only articulated verbally, but also through symbolic languages from the world of religion and culture for democratic aspirations. Those symbolic languages are shown in the exterior architecture of public rooms, religious and culture celebrations. As Izak Lattu notes, “Symbols and rituals are fundamental to the construction of social interaction.”⁴⁰

³⁶ Suseno, *Etika Jawa*, 30.

³⁷ Aulia Ulfa Dewi, *Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Agama Islam melalui Wacana Pluralitas Keberagamaan [Internalisation of the Values of Islamic Education Through the Discourse of the Plurality of Religions] di Pondok Pesantren Edi Mancoro Kec. Tuntang Kab. Semarang* (Bachelor thesis, IAIN Salatiga, 2014), 74, Februari, 9 2020, <http://e-repository.perpus.iainsalatiga.ac.id/3586>

³⁸ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Nadhlatul Ulama: Dari Politik Kekuasaan sampai Pemikiran Keagamaan [Nadhlatul Ulama: From the Politics of Power to the Religious Thinking]* (Semarang: Lembaga Studi Sosial dan Agama (eLSA) Press, 2014), 196.

³⁹ The interview with participant 10.

⁴⁰ Izak Lattu, *Orality and Interreligious Relationships: The Role of Collective Memory in Christian-Muslim Engagements in Maluku, Indonesia*, (a dissertation presented to the faculty of the Graduate Theological Union of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Berkeley, California, 2014), 231.

Confrontational Contest of Aspirations on Democratic Life in Public Sphere

Salatiga society is not free from challenges to democracy. The challenges that became the touchstone of post-Reformation democratic life took place when facing the case of the *Salib Putih*.

Since the beginning, the *Salib Putih* area has been a symbol of inclusive, egalitarian, and humanist Christian ministry. The service was initiated by Adolph Theodor Jacobus van Emmerick, a Dutch citizen with his wife Alice Cornelia Cleverly, a British citizen. They came to Indonesia in 1882 as civil servants of the Dutch government. When Mount Kelud erupted, the couple had deep concern for the fate of refugees from East Java, whether they were Christians or not. So, they transited to Salatiga before heading to their final destination of Semarang. This led to their serving them the *Salib Putih*. The *Salib Putih* area shows another noble side of the humanity of the Dutch colonial community towards the colonized people.

In the post-independence era, Adolph Theodor Jacobus van Emmerick handed over his ownership rights of *Salib Putih* and all its assets to the Javanese Christian Church. However, the controversial public policy by John Manoppo as the mayor triggered conflicts in Salatiga. The long-lasting hidden tension to have the assets of *Salib Putih* by certain parties in the conflict became an open conflict which was triggered by Manoppo's decision to give rights to the Salatiga Islamic University Foundation to use fifty hectares of *Salib Putih* land from January 1, 2008, to December 2022. Manoppo did this without considering public interests. The implicated party then went beyond the idea by demanding not only to use the land but also the right of ownership of the land. The legality of ownership by the Javanese Christian Church was challenged by the intolerant and undemocratic mass organization movement. This mass movement was led by the leadership of the Islamic Defenders Front—an anti-democratic Islamic organization. The Salatiga Islamic Community Forum is a community organization that supports the Islamic Defenders Front from the Salatiga local area. A resident explained: “Some individuals from the Javanese ethnic group from Salatiga and outside Salatiga such as Solo were mobilized to articulate their economic and political interests.”⁴¹ They demanded that the assets of the *Salib Putih* be divided among Muslims so that it could be used as “a center for Islamic activities”⁴².

Although only a few individuals from the society of Salatiga City responded to my questions, their responses are sufficient to reflect that Islamic communities in Salatiga do not have a single political orientation. The plurality of orientation of Islamic politics develops in Salatiga City. In a democratic nation, they have a constitutional right to live and grow. However, although several Muslims are sympathetic to radical and fundamentalist movements in Islam, the mainstream of Muslims embrace moderate Islam.

As in the lifeworld, the people of Salatiga still act wisely. The people of Salatiga did not show an emotional attitude, but continued to block or disband this movement. As a series of actions by this group, according to a participant named Zaenuri,⁴³ the Salatiga Islamic Community Forum scheduled Abu Bakar Ba'asyir (the founder of the Al-Mu'min Islamic boarding school in Ngruki, Sukoharjo, Central Java, and Chairman of the Indonesian Mujahidin

⁴¹ The interview with participant 11.

⁴² The interview with participant 12.

⁴³ The interview with participant 13.

Council) to convey his aspirations at the Pancasila Field. However, the plan was immediately confronted by the Salatiga Nahdlatul Ulama community. Their action of confrontational communication is also a representation of the communication actions of the community and Nahdlatul Ulama institutions at the provincial and national levels. The high level of sensitivity of the lifeworld represented by Nahdlatul Ulama to the negative impact Baasyir came and spoke about was the result of the thoughts of Nahdlatul Ulama intellectuals in living their religiosity. According to Zaenuri, at the peak of the tension, Beatrix Wilhelmina Armgard, queen of the Netherlands even called John Manoppo, the mayor of Salatiga, to confirm the Javanese Church's ownership of *Salib Putih*.⁴⁴

Zaenuri's leadership in the crucial constellation deserves appreciation. His character of critical, pluralist, and democratic leadership is the result of a long social construction. He was the public leader raised by the people in the lifeworld of Salatiga. The values of tolerant, egalitarian, and pluralist Nahdlatul Ulama have been internalized strongly in him. His Master's degree that was earned at UKSW indisputably influenced his thoughts regarding the practices of social life in primordial values of Salatiga City.

The intolerant group took actions in the name of Islam but did not automatically mobilize support from the Islamic community in Salatiga massively. Only a few individuals from the Salatiga Islamic community joined this movement. Some stayed silent and did not integrate themselves into the movement's symbolically articulate rational and confrontational communication actions. Salatiga society is not easily manipulated and exploited with Islamic symbols. They have an independent and critical personality about respect for the dignity and interests of Islam. Therefore, instead of expecting support, Muslims appeared at the forefront of confronting Ba'asyir's agenda to mobilize the masses regarding the establishment of the Islamic Center in *Salib Putih*.

As a representation of the radical Islamic movement, Ba'asyir's presence can be understood as the presence of a trans-national radical Islamic agenda. While the Islamic Defenders Front's actions may emphasize the aspect of economic benefits, it seems that this kind of economic target is not Ba'asyir's priority. The priority is to penetrate the lifeworld of Salatiga in order to change the tolerant personality of Salatiga Islam into radical and fundamentalist Islam. If Baasyir was free to speak in the public sphere of Salatiga's Pancasila Square, the gate to the Islamization of the Salatiga lifeworld, which is characterized by radical and fundamentalist Islam, might be more open. It could be that Salatiga, which is known as an oasis of civilization in democratic life, could be threatened with collapse.

The confrontation in communication in the public sphere, which is actualized by religious leaders under the leadership of the Nahdlatul Ulama community at the forefront of blocking the penetration of radical Islamic groups reflects the superiority of the lifeworld of Salatiga when dealing with actions that seek to degrade the civilization of a harmonious and humanist society as well as a democratic nationality. Even though the Islamic Defenders Front's intolerance movement is protected by law, the lifeworld of Salatiga appears to be a force that can effectively break the movement through a stream of communication in the public sphere.

⁴⁴ The interview with participant 13.

For a long time, the efforts of the mass movement to control the *Salib Putih* lands show that this movement has a strong financial capacity. As a community organization that does not receive funding from the State Revenue and Expenditure Budget, it may be assumed that this organization has received financial support on a transnational basis. In the legal process, finally, in 2017 the State Administrative Court of Central Java Province enforced the legality of the Javanese Christian Church as the owner of the White Cross land.

The presence of fundamentalist and radical Islamic movements represented by Islamic Defenders Front and Baasyir reveals the charm and strategic socio-political position of Salatiga, especially concerning the political contestation of radical and fundamentalist Islam at the national level with its global network. Efforts to infiltrate Salatiga have the potential to provide significant socio-political benefits for the continuity of its political agenda. In other words, the lifeworld of Salatiga is not only the epicenter and bulwark of democratic civilization for the Salatiga people but can also influence the civilization of the Indonesian nation.

Controversy in communicating in the public sphere regarding the ownership of the White Cross reveals the dynamics of “a struggle or war of interest,” writes Mudji Sutrisno.⁴⁵ The essence of the White Cross case can further be interpreted from Habermasian public sphere theory as a struggle in the public sphere between the society of the lifeworld (civil society) that celebrates a pluralistic society that is inclusive and democratic and the political society of the system that instrumentalizes the exclusive, radical and fundamentalist values of Islam to achieve the power and capital hidden agenda. The above case is not a horizontal conflict of individuals in the world of life. The intolerant mass movement only represents the interests of political actors and capital owners because owning the half size of 100 hectares of *Salib Putih* land by supporters of radical masses means owning profitable economic land. From the perspective of electoral politics, the decision of Mayor Manoppo for the radical group means he was expected to gain acceptability and electability among Islamic constituents for the next municipal election. Although they seemingly identify themselves as a representation of Islam and on behalf of Islam, they more represent the interests of subjective individuals in the system loaded with interests and targets of power and capital. The confrontation that was openly made by the Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama Salatiga has managed to delegitimize and denied their aspirations as the aspirations of Islamic communities of Salatiga City.

From the perspective of electoral democracy, the tendentious policy of Mayor Manoppo for certain Islamic circles with the proposal of land ownership sacrifices the rights of Javanese Christian Church and is regarded as the strategic action to increase his acceptability and electability in the next municipal election. His political ambition in the movement of intolerant and undemocratic groups democratic stimulates their militancy in Salatiga to go further to the room of the Administrative Court of Central Java Province. The leadership of Manoppo at the local government level reveals an important fact that political identity can be used by anyone to gain political power. This case shows that Mayor Manoppo gave special treatment to certain Islamic groups to gain support from the majority by negating the legality of the Javanese Christian Church’s ownership of *Salib Putih* land.

⁴⁵ Mudji Sutrisno, “Krisis Ruang Publik Kultural” dalam *Ruang Publik: Melacak “Partisipasi Demokratis” dari Polis sampai Cyberspace* [“The Crisis of the Cultural Public Sphere” in *The Public Sphere: Investigating “Democratic Participation from Polis until Cyberspace*], ed. F. Budi Hardiman (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2010), 292.

Nahdlatul Ulama's Islamic leadership, which is full of social, political, and religious insight, as well as national commitment and sensitivity, understands the common situation regarding the White Cross case, which is very significant. This act is also an act of confrontational communication by the Nahdlatul Ulama community and institutions both at the provincial and national levels and is at the same time a representation of the communication actions of all religions in Salatiga for a democratic civilization.

The lifeworld of the Salatiga people effectively guides the dynamics of the White Cross case which makes the public sphere so productive for democracy. This case strengthens the character of the democratic life of the Salatiga community, which celebrates humanist and democratic religion and nationality as crystallized in the Pancasila ideology. The meaning of the predicate of Salatiga by the Dutch colonials in the past as the most beautiful city in Central Java can be deconstructed and interpreted in a new way. In the past, the term was assigned to the interests of the Dutch colonialists, but now the term is assigned to Salatiga because of its commitment to the socio-political interests of the Indonesian nation which celebrates an emancipatory, egalitarian, inclusive and pluralist democracy. The people of Salatiga deserve to be respected as having the title of Mini Indonesia and the most tolerant city in Indonesia.

Conclusion

Phenomenologically, the public sphere of the Salatiga society seems effectively exists as a pillar of democracy. The individuals intensely and creatively articulate their aspirations whether it is appreciative or confrontative of the reality of living together. Their lifeworld such as the community of religion and the community of campus life influence and guide them to respond to the reality of living together. The political commitment of the pluralist Salatiga society to a democratic living civilization that celebrates the noble values of emancipation, equality, and inclusiveness, and plurality has strong roots in lifeworld elements such as religiosity, spirituality, culture, and historicity. Such noble values are disseminated creatively by the religious community, university community, and cultural community. The university communities, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana and Salatiga National Institute of Islamic Religion, play a central role in disseminating collective awareness of collective history and rational understanding of the noble values and inclusive character of all religions. Religious commitment to a living democratic civilization intertwines simultaneously as an expression of loyalty to the political system and the noble vocation of religion and the lifeworld.

RY

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